

LONDON WALK

Friday, 18 July

Twenty four members of the Walking Group set off to London on one of the hottest days of the year, taking advantage of the “two for one” ticket offer from Chiltern Railways, to walk a small section of the Thames Path Walk which follows a route of approximately 40 miles in its entirety from the Cotswolds in the West, through the heart of London and out to the Thames Barrage in the East.

Our walk commenced at Liverpool Street station, which is one of the oldest stations in London. The underground section was opened in 1875 and traces of soot from steam trains can still be seen on the ceiling as well as the vents over the platforms to allow steam to escape, which have now been enclosed with glass.

From Liverpool Street Station, our route took us through the ‘square mile’ of the City of London, past



30 St. Mary Axe, famous for Norman Foster's **Gherkin**, 184 metres tall and opened in April 2004. It stands on the former site of the Baltic Exchange, which was extensively damaged in 1992 by the explosion of a bomb placed by the Provisional IRA.

From there, we continued our journey through Leadenhall Market, one of the oldest markets in London, dating back to the 14th century. It primarily sells fresh food but among the vendors there are cheesemongers, butchers and florists. Originally a meat, game and poultry market, it stands on what was the centre of Roman London. The ornate roof structure, painted green, maroon and cream, and the cobbled floors of the current structure, make the market a tourist attraction.



We joined the Thames riverbank at Tower Bridge and a mile or so further on we had a spectacular view of the Shard and the Beehive.

Our walk then largely followed the south bank of the river until several miles later, and flagging in the heat, we arrived at our lunch stop. The Prospect of Whitby is an historic pub, which lays claim to being the site of the oldest riverside tavern in London, dating from around 1520. All that remains from the building's earliest period is the 400 year old stone floor. In former times it was a meeting place for sailors, smugglers and cut-throats. In the 17th century, it became the hostelry of choice of "Hanging" Judge Jeffreys, scourge of the Monmouth Rebellion. He lived nearby and a noose hangs by a window, commemorating his custom. Also, according to legend, criminals would be tied up to the posts at low tide and left there to drown when the tide came in!



The final stretch of our walk took us to Canary Wharf, located in the West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs. The docks once formed part of the busiest port in the world but after they were closed in 1980 the Government adopted various policies to stimulate the redevelopment of the area, including the creation of the London Docklands Development Corporation. Canary Wharf is now home to the second



financial centre in London and the headquarters of numerous professional services firms and the media, not to mention a plethora of expensive-looking apartments overlooking the Thames.

After a pretty exhausting 6 mile walk, we caught the river boat shuttle from Canary Wharf to Embankment to pick up the underground for Marylebone and the start of our journey home.

All in all, a wonderful day out, with the added bonus of having Colin Tufnell to expertly guide us through the streets of London and point out places of interest. So excellent were his 'herding skills' that no-one got lost! Our thanks must also go Barbara for organizing such an interesting trip.

Janet Cato